THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

Vol. 2, No. 6. July-August, 1963.

Whenever I sit down to write the Newsletter, I always look at our last effort to see what I promised would come. Often the current edition is not what we said it would be. This edition is just that - different but full of surprises.

Please excuse our tardiness. Jim, Idamay, and myself, have all been very busy, as always. I have not seen Jim for a month - we have contacted each other by 'phone or letter - and we live in the same city! Idamay has been away for a long motor trip through New England. I am writing this Newsletter from my hotel room in Vancouver. By next month we should all be back to normal, and our Newsletter should revert to its normal monthly pattern.

Lots of goodies in this issue. A complimentary issue of "Music Memories" has been included, courtesy of Pat Cathers - an excellent magazine. A copy of our record notes on Tom Shea is also attached. We have news of performers, and our latest sheet music offerings, as well as piano rolls from Larry Givens. Last but not least, we proudly reprint an article from the Toronto Globe and Mail on our hardworking Treasurer and her husband - Idamay and Allen MacInnes.

RECORDS

We again shamelessly push our record, RSR #1 - "Classic and Modern Rags" by Tom Shea. Jim Kinnear's section covers some of the favourable comments that we have received on it. We not only expect each subscriber to buy RSR #1 (only $5.00), we hope you will push it with us. I don't listen to it more than once a day, and I think Tom Shea's "Spasm Rag" will gain a place of honour along with "Maple Leaf" and "Sensation". If any of you care to argue with me, go ahead, but first buy the record. Jim discusses the Ron Weatherburn record in his section - it is coming. Bob Darch tells us there will be a couple of new records out by him soon. They will be "A Night With Bob Darch" type records. We will give you more information when we have it.

Max Morath has made a new record for Epic. Stereo BN 26066
Mono LN 24066

This record is his "Turn of the Century" college date programme edited down to 40 minutes. It contains two piano solos, "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Ragtime Nightingale".

PERFORMERS

Wally Rose: recently got a card from Wally who was vacationing in Hawaii. Presume he will return to San Francisco to the old stand. Always nice to hear from you Wally.

Bob Darch: Bob is spending the summer at the Club 76 in Toronto. Bob is the same great prophet of Ragtime that he has always been. As some of you may know, Bob has at considerable personal expense, accumulated and copywritten all the Joe Lamb music. He has recently released this music to Knocky Parker and E. D. Nunn (Audiophile Records) for a series of records on the complete Ragtime works of Joseph F. Lamb. For this record we thank in anticipation Knocky and Mr. Nunn. We also thank Bob Darch and Melie Lamb for making the tunes available.

Johnny Maddox: John is also in Toronto, and believe it or not, he is also playing at the Club 76. John is alternating with Bob Darch. Surely this will never happen again for a long time. To whet your appetite even more, John is not playing all his sets alone, but is playing duets with Glenn Rowell. Next month we will give you more information on Glenn. They are wonderful to hear.

Max Morath: Max is as busy as ever. He is doing a 5-minute series of Ragtime shows for the Pacific Northwest Bell, to commence January 1/64. These are condensed "Turn of the Century"-type shows. Several will be all Ragtime. You lucky Oregon and Washington subscribers. Next fall Max will again be playing college dates all across the U.S. Max' book of rags is coming along. More about it later.

PIANO ROLLS

Larry Givens, RD #1, Wexford, Pa., has produced eighteen 'new' piano rolls. These rolls are $2.75 each, and are the very best. They are perfect technically and reproduced "as written". I bought them all (expensive Larry, but so worthwhile). For those of you who like rolls, these are a must. If you get one or all of them, you will be pleased.

NIGHTINGALE RAG	Joe Lamb	PINEAPPLE RAG	Scott Joplin
TOP LINER RAG	Joe Lamb	HELIOTROPE BOUQUET	Joplin-Chauvin
EXCELSIOR	Joe Lamb		
SYCAMORE RAG	Scott Joplin	BUFFALO RAG	Tom Turpin
GLADIOLUS RAG	Scott Joplin	HARLEM RAG	Tom Turpin
WALL STREET RAG	Scott Joplin	THE NAKED DANCE	Jelly Roll Morton
ROSE LEAF RAG	Scott Joplin		
PEACHERINE RAG	Scott Joplin	PASTIME RAG NO. 3	A. Matthews
FIG LEAF RAG	Scott Joplin	EVERGREEN RAG	James Scott
		OPHELIA RAG	James Scott
		KANSAS CITY RAG	James Scott

SHEET MUSIC

We omitted to mention in last month's Bulletin, that through the kindness of Bob Darch we have obtained a further supply of his own composition "Opera House Rag". Bob spent the summer of 1956 in Virginia City, Nevada, regaining the 'true exuberant spirit of those gay and boisterous times of this fabulous metropolis.' He wrote several numbers during that summer, of which "Opera House Rag" was one. This rag, "A Sterling Selection", was published only recently and dedicated to Piper's Opera House which still stands in Virgina City, and about which Bob has devoted a full page. This excellent number is available for $1.00 postpaid. It is not too difficult to play, being written in A-flat and D-flat.

We have recently acquired a small number of folios which contain the following:

MAPLE LEAF RAG, CLIMAX RAG, GRACE AND BEAUTY RAG, HILARITY RAG, CATARACT RAG, plus Artie Matthews' WEARY BLUES, Joe King Oliver's CHIMES BLUES, and five other blues numbers.

Ask for folio 3/6. Price $3.00 postpaid.

PALM LEAF RAG, Joplin, was printed recently and is now ready for mailing, $1.00 postpaid.

CRAB APPLES, TWO STEP, Wenrich. The Society's July selection is now available. It is a fairly easy number to negotiate, and is one of Percy's better ones.

We would like to mention again here, that the Society has ample stocks of the 17 rags we have reprinted to date. As future printing programme depends to some extent on the continued sale of past numbers, we would like to hear from those who intend to order some of our music but who just haven't got around to it yet. Of the following numbers, all available for $1.00 each, postpaid, only our first reprint, "Original Rags" is in short supply.

EASY WINNERS
ELITE SYNCOPATIONS
THE ENTERTAINER
PALM LEAF RAG
SWIPESY CAKEWALK
SUNFLOWER SLOW DRAG
LIVE WIRES RAG
HARLEM RAG
BOWERY BUCK
FROG LEGS RAG
KANSAS CITY RAG
SENSATION RAG
MISSISSIPPI RAG
THE SMILER
CRAB APPLES, TWO STEP.
ST. LOUIS RAG

If you do not have our March, 1963, complete list of rags we have available, write us for it.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

Enclosed with this issue is the June volume of "Music Memories Monthly". Pat Cather, who publishes the magazine, has devoted this issue mainly to Ragtime, and has sent us a free copy for each of the Society subscribers.

Pat states that every second issue will be devoted to merchandise of his own for sale.

The Society wrote to Jerry Vogel, the music company which holds the copyright to "Rose Leaf Rag", for permission to reprint this beautiful number. To date we have had no reply. If you would like to add your collective voice to ours, write Vogel Music Company, 112 West 44th. St., New York 18, N.Y. Tell them we sent you.

The New Orleans Jazz Club advises us of a series of afternoon concerts on Sundays. The August 11th. concert will feature George Lewis and the Sayles' Silverleaf Ragtimers. Write the N.O.J.C., 2417 Octavia Street, for further details. (New Orleans 15, of course).

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK:

Re Tom Shea and the Society's first LP record, Bob Cantwell writes, "He will probably turn out to be a progressive jazz lecturer at Wayne University in disguise." There have been many comments on, and much speculation about Tom Shea, so we decided to include with this Newsletter, the stuffer which has gone out with every record, and which explains briefly how Tom came to be interested in Ragtime. Most of us have been catalyzed or propelled suddenly into Ragtime ..... so was Tom. However, here the similarity ended, for Tom composed his own tunes in much the same way as Joe Lamb. Our stuffer explains how Tom's rags came to be named.

Terry Waldo of Columbus, Ohio, who leads a traditional jazz band called the "Fungus Five" (our music grows on you), writes that he too was thrilled to see that we are publishing the old rags and putting out an LP to boot. (Terry ordered one of everything we have in stock!)

Larry Stevenson writes from Weston, Ontario, "The recording is terrific! Can you spare two more for my friends?"

Tom Ross from Beloit, Wisconsin, writes, "Congratulations on a masterpiece. This young man and his compositions are, in my humble opinion, the most refreshingly original event to come along in the traditional ragtime and jazz piano field since the mid-forties." Obviously we agree very much with Tom Ross.

All this hullabaloo about our 'masterpiece' has meant unavoidable delays with the Ron Weatherburn LP, which we had hoped to have had out by now. Our apologies to those of you who have sent us your $5.00, and if you can bear with us a little while longer we should have it out soon. Meanwhile, we are reprinting an article which appeared in the September 26th., 1962, issue of "Jazz News"..... "Questions and Answers by Ron Weatherburn on Ragtime".

News from Europe and the U.K. Neville Dickie of London, writes that he spent a very enjoyable few days with Vincent Terbois in Geneva. Vincent is a regular and faithful correspondent, and as far as he knows, is Switzerland's only ragophile. However, he makes up for it by the quantity and quality of sheet music which he is gradually building up. Keep up the good work Vincent!

Brian Bulgin, who has recently moved from Birmingham to Ludlow (population 6,000), tells us that the public library in Ludlow has a copy of "They All Played Ragtime" but that it has not been taken out in over six months. He intends to do a little missionary work in Ludlow.

Ron Weatherburn writes about the annual jazz exodus up the Thames, when "About 8,000 English Jazz Fans crowd on to two pleasure boats and sail from London up the Thames and back in company with just about every professional jazz group in the country. Band pianists are expected to play solo in the bars for an hour or so. This year I took the unprecedented step of playing nothing but Ragtime for one-and-a-quarter hours. Not only that, I played from music, yours included, all the way. I ended up with a crowded bar, everybody being most appreciative and most polite, which is quite a triumph, I can assure you."

News from Canada and the U.S.A. The unique situation currently existing at Toronto's Club 76, is covered elsewhere. Don't miss it.

Those of you who are looking for that hard to find rag, and who have exhausted every usual source, might do well to write to Dean Snyder, 406 South Main Street, Los Angeles 13, California. If Dean doesn't have it, quit looking!

PERSONALITIES

Jim Kinnear and myself feel that Idamay MacInnes and her husband Allen, are personalities. They both work hard for the Society. Idamay keeps our complicated books - well. Idamay also plays well. She specializes in Joseph Lamb's music. During their recent new England trip, the MacInnes' spent a delightful evening with Melie Lamb in New York. Melie got to hear Idamay's repertoire of Joe's music, which is considerable. In the entertainment section of a recent edition of the Toronto Globe and Mail, the MacInnes' got written up. We are thrilled to reprint this story.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SATURDAY, JULY 20, 1963

Mr. and Mrs. Allen MacInnes at stripped pianos which they rebuilt.

Designers Collect Music in Ragtime

By MARY JUKES

Idamay and Allen MacInnes, interior designers by profession, have three pianos in their 150-year-old, seven-room, restored farmhouse, hidden behind a hedgerow on Eglinton Ave., between Bayview and Mount Pleasant.

One, a baby grand, is in what was once the old parlor of the house. But the two that get the real workout are an ordinary upright and an upright player, a few feet apart in a room at the back of the house. Here the MacInneses and their guests whack out ragtime duets often into the early hours of the morning.

Ragtime became an obsession with the couple three years ago when they heard professional player, Bob Darch, at Club 76. Until then, Mrs. MacInnes, a pianist with a classical background who had never let her music lapse, had never played a note of ragtime or jazz of any kind.

Experienced collectors of early pine furniture and rare pine primitives, the MacInneses moved right on to the collecting of old ragtime sheet music and piano player rolls and everything else they could find that was significant to ragtime and the turn of the century.

Collecting led finally to the forming of a Ragtime Society with two other ragtime enthusiasts, John Fisher and Jim Kinnear. These three have pulled together a loosely knit group of more than 200 ragtime enthusiasts.

Communication is kept up through a monthly letter printed in King, which carries news of hard-to-find ragtime sheet music and piano player rolls, and information picked out of a heavy flow of correspondence from members of the society.

Without any help the couple rebuilt their two uprights by "just taking them apart," Mrs. MacInnes said casually. "When all the pieces were laid out on the table they kind of made sense."

Repairs included such things as the hardening of the soft felt on the hammers the ordinary upright. This was to give the notes a banjo-like ring. The banjo played an important part in early ragtime which had its beginnings around 1890 in sporting houses in Sedalia, a booming frontier railhead town in Missouri. By 1910 ragtime had swept around the world, the Maple Leaf Rag, written by one of the early writers, Scott Joplin, selling more than 1,000,000 copies.

Two other writers whose songs are now collectors' items are James Scott and Joseph Lamb. Joseph Lamb went to school in Berlin (now Kitchener) and composed such old time pieces as The Humber Rag and The Muskoka Rag.

During a 3,000-mile motor trop to the United States in June, the MacInnesses called on several members of the Ragtime Society. They found Larry Givens of Wexford, Pa., author of a new book called The Rebuilding of Player Pianos, in a huge white clapboard barn tinkering with more than a dozen player pianos he had picked up around the country.

In explaining ragtime, Mrs. MacInnes reduced it to such simple terms as a four-four beat with the left hand and syncopation with the right. Jazz, she said, which entered the picture around 1917, reversed this set up, giving the four-four beat to the right hand and syncopation to the left.

Such dances as the Bunny Hug, the Grizzly Bear, the Turkey Trot and the Tiger Rag, were contemporary with ragtime. The revival of the piano player has led to a revival of interest in ragtime piano rolls, Larry Givens being among those who are cutting ragtime classics for collectors.

Right in Toronto William Drake, retired and in his 70s is doing what the MacInnesses describe as an amazing job of reproducing old ragtime rolls with a piece of machinery he made himself.

RAGTIME

JAZZ NEWS questions RON WEATHERBURN

(PIANIST with KENNY BALL'S JAZZMEN)

What place does ragtime hold in your life?

Frankly, no musical form has earned so much respect or dedication from me as has ragtime.

What do you mean by "ragtime"?

I mean the music that stems from the piano pieces that were composed and written down by men like Scott Joplin, Tom Turpin, Joseph Lamb, James Scott and such pioneers as were living in and around the mid-southern states at about the turn of the century.

Does that mean that there is no definitive form that can be described as "ragtime"?

No, I don't mean that. The fact is, that so many writers were inspired by ragtime and its revolutionary notation that it becomes difficult, unless one has seen and played the original, to distinguish that original conception from the many offshoots.

Offshoots? For instance...?

Well, Jelly Roll Morton comes straight to mind, but there are many more who were influenced by ragtime; not only by its notation, which constituted a technical revolution, but also by its acceptance of true harmonic pattern. That is, using the same basic chordal sequence over and again for different rags.

Do you feel that any of the standard tunes owe any sort of debt to ragtime?

Well, the middle eight of *Honeysuckle rose,* for instance has a very strong ragtime flavour, and *Honeysuckle* is, in my opinion, one of the most exciting and memorable tunes ever written, however simple it may be.

More exciting than any of the rags you know?

Oh no, not necessarily. Rags deserve a listener. They're not just something to dance to or get excited about, although they certainly qualify for both. If I were ever to play a rag, in concert or at a jazz club, and feel that there was not at least one person sitting out front who was LISTENING, then I should be forced to accept the fact that I was playing for nobody but myself. That happens often, believe me.

Why should you take this so personally? Are you in a position to be able to take on the job of teacher?

I may not be the best ragtime pianist in Europe. I know I'm not. Ray Smith is. But I play with Kenny Ball, and Ray doesn't. I travel the length and breadth of the place and, sad to relate, Ray is stuck in or around London.

What are you getting at?

The point I'm trying to make is that I am in a position (and a very enviable one it is in some respects) from which I can influence the musical tastes of young jazz enthusiasts. Ray Smith is not in that position, yet. When I wipe the sweat from my face and put my glasses back on after *Fingerbuster* there is the chance, particularly if it's a concert, that I shall be asked by Kenny to play an encore.

So what?

So I can either play another fast, technically difficult and loud piece, or risk my reputation.

Now you're getting personal again.

Not at all. I am alone on a concert stage, with a microphone and a piano. If I were to turn to Kenny and say "What about *Grace and beauty?*" he wouldn't refuse me. But I would never do such a thing. So I suggest *Perfect rag, Maple Leaf* or something like that. It's no good my sitting down and playing *Grace and beauty, The entertainer, Sapho,* or even *Fig leaf.* I would sense Kenny's uneasiness and I wouldn't enjoy playing. And that uneasiness would convey itself in the first four bars to the audience. So I'm quite happy to play *Cataract, Perfect* or *Maple Leaf,* because they are so obviously rags. It's a beginning, you see?

You're playing down to the audience, then?

For God's sake, no. I'm playing *up* to them. I'm taking for granted the fact that they can recognise and listen to a rag. Ragtime is a very specialised form of art, but at the same time it is an extremely simple form. I know it never had a golden era over here, but it did in the States, and we are basically the same people. We've all got a bit of Irish, Scotch and West Country in us and, discounting the Negro influence, that all went to make up ragtime.

So we should discount the Negro influence?

The Negro influence was incidental. Don't mention this to anybody else, but I'm sure there were men playing ragtime before John Stark opened up his office and took Scott Joplin under his wing.

You mean Joplin wasn't the innovator?

Joplin was an educated Negro, an educated man, and he was the first human being to put ragtime down on to paper. That doesn't make him the geatest, or the first, ragtime composer who ever lived.

Oh, who was the greatest ragtime composer who ever lived, then?

In my opinion, Joseph Lamb.

A white man?

Yes.

Ragtime is a white man's music, then?

Not at all. You asked me who was the greatest ragtime composer, and I told you: Joseph Lamb.

RON WEATHERBURN - Ragtime pianist

Even though Lamb's biggest thrill was being told, by a coloured audience, that his "Sensation rag" was "a real coloured rag"?

Yes, even so, because Lamb was a dedicated composer. If he thought that he was composing "real coloured" rags, then it could only have inspired him. His idol was Scott Joplin, but in my opinion he surpassed Joplin with his *Excelsior, Bohemia rag* and *Topliner.*

What about "The entertainer", "Fig leaf rag", "Original rags", "Maple Leaf" and "Pineapple rag"?

What, indeed. They are wonderful rags, as good as anything ever written. But not in the same class as Lamb's greatest. Joplin was a more naive man and his rags were simple, easily taken in by the public, easily remembered; their themes were easy to whistle on the street.

Surely that's the test of a good tune?

Yes, but ragtime doesn't rely only upon good tunes. It's a classical music form.

We've heard that before...

I can't help that; it's true. Ragtime music is, intrinsically, a pianist's music, and any criticism from outside that sphere must be either ignored or met by a ragtime pianist.

That's why you'd record a long-player of ragtime with no fear of adverse criticism.

Yes, that's why. To be understood, ragtime must be either read or heard. Heard, that is, by a musician.

That sounds dreadfully smug.

It's not meant to be. It just means that, in the last resort, the satisfaction of playing ragtime piano is more intensely personal than any other kind of music I've come across.

COMING

Next issue we will cover some of the activities of Pat Cathers and "Music Memories". We will also tell you more about Glenn Rowell, who is playing duets with John Maddox at Toronto's Club 76, (alternating with Bob Darch). We will also tell you details of Max Morath's tremendous undertaking in the sheet music field. Max' book of 100 Rags will be ready soon, and you will be hearing more from us on this.

If you want our new sheet music or any of our 17 Society reprints, let us know. As I said earlier, our record of Tom Shea is a must. If you don't have it yet, order it now.

See you next month.

John A. Fisher,
Chairman.